



The Ant and the Grasshopper (a new version)

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We all know Aesop's fable about the ant and the grasshopper: The ant works hard in the withering heat all summer long, building his house and gathering supplies for winter. The grasshopper thinks the ant is a fool to work so hard while he sings the summer away. Come winter, the ant is warm and well fed in his home, while the grasshopper goes hungry and dies of cold. The moral is, of course, work hard and plan for the future.

Here's a new version of the old tale. It starts pretty much the same, but read on and you'll find that it's very contemporary. The ant works hard in the withering heat all summer long, building his house and gathering supplies for winter. The grasshopper thinks the ant is a fool to work so hard while he sings the summer away.

Come winter, the grasshopper calls a press conference and demands to know why the ant should be allowed to be warm and well fed while others are cold and starving. The left-wing Avgi and Rizospastis newspapers publish a photo of the shivering grasshopper next to pictures of the ant tucking into a lavish meal next to the fireplace in his comfortable home. A new documentary created for state TV channel ERT broadcasts images depicting extreme social inequality.

The ruling SYRIZA party organizes a public rally with the slogan “We are moving ahead: Solidarity – democracy – social justice,” with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras as the keynote speaker. The grasshopper makes an appearance via Skype, asking SYRIZA to put an end to the humanitarian crisis.

Messages of support for the grasshopper go viral on social media. How come an advanced member-state of the European Union permits the grasshopper to suffer so much? The members of the Communist Party-affiliated union PAME organize a demonstration outside the ant’s house, where TV stations show them singing “The wheel will turn, the poor will eat well” and holding signs against the EU and the plutocracy: “Oppressors of the people, thieves and robbers, troika, government and capitalists,” “No to tax robbery, let the plutocracy pay for the crisis.”

Members of the Rouvikonas anarchist group together with the “Convention of Anarchists-Communists for the Class Counterattack” and throw red paint at the ant’s house and scatter fliers with messages of support for the grasshopper. The police arrest five people but then release them as they find no evidence with which to charge them.

In an ERT interview, Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos says the ant got rich off the back of the grasshopper and proposes doubling the income tax in order to achieve “inclusive growth” by providing a “social dividend” to those on low incomes. The government submits a bill to Parliament to raise the income tax rate retroactively. At the same time the government raises the wealth tax on property, while exempting low-income areas and islands with a population below 3,067 residents, in the context of the conflict between the “many” and the “elite.” Both bills are voted into law.

The ant does not have the money to pay the additional taxes and his house is confiscated by the state. At the same time, the bank forecloses on the grasshopper’s house and sells it at an e-auction. Panagiotis Lafazanis and Zoe Constantopoulou appear outside the grasshopper’s house shouting “No home in the hands of a banker.”

The grasshopper is hired by the fire brigade based on “social criteria.” The ant has left the country in search of rule of law and meritocracy. The story ends as the grasshopper eats what’s left of the ant’s food in the house that the state has granted him. The house is near collapse due to lack of maintenance. A few months later, the grasshopper is found dead in a drug-related incident at Pedion tou Areos park.

The moral of the story is: Vote responsibly!

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